

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1321781

MIRACLE AND HISTORY

J. H. SKRINE

BT
317
S5



The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

MIRACLE AND HISTORY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

CREED AND THE CREEDS. Their
Function in Religion. Being the Bampton
Lectures for 1911. 8vo, 7s. 6d. net.

PASTOR AGNORUM: A Schoolmaster's
Afterthoughts. Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

PASTOR OVIUM: The Day-Book of a
Country Parson. Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

SERMONS TO PASTORS AND MASTERS.
Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

WHAT IS FAITH? A Hermit's Epistle to
Some that are Without. Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

MIRACLE AND HISTORY

A STUDY IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH
AND THE RESURRECTION

BY

THE REV. JOHN HUNTLEY SKRINE, D.D.

VICAR OF ST. PETER IN THE EAST, OXFORD

BAMPTON LECTURER IN 1911

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1912

All rights reserved

*"Miraculum, θαῦμα: quidquid admirationem afferre
potest, sive supra naturam sit, sive non."*

LEXICON FACCIOLATI.

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

AT CLAREMONT

California

MIRACLE AND HISTORY

WHEN we have studied a thing with "the eye on the object" till the eye has become bemused, it is well to take the eye off the object for a while and then renew the inspection at a different angle. When a column of three figures has refused to yield up to us the error in addition which we know we have made, we begin afresh by starting from the top downwards, believing that the freshness of a changed order in the counters will awake the hypnotised nerves of numeration, and the reality which has slipped past us in disguise will be caught at last. When we have lost ourself in the maze of a wood, we work our way to a confine or some well-known point from which paths radiate, and start with a new idea of our direction. And when the problem or the maze is theological the same mode of extrication will be our best resort.

A theological maze from which we are needing disentanglement at this time is the problem of the Miraculous. Is the belief in miracle an integral part of a Christian's faith? More specifically is it essential that a Christian, or at least a Catholic Christian, should assert the facts of a birth of Jesus from a Virgin Mother, and a rising again of the Body which was laid in the garden tomb?

I

In the controversy over this question, which is of long standing, but has in the English Church passed

5

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

through an acuter phase through the occurrence recently of a practical incident, the parties to it have worked upon long accepted lines of reasoning. Disputers of the miracles urge that the historical evidence for the events is insufficient, and that their occurrence is also inconsistent with the deepest conceptions of the nature of God and of man. Maintainers of the miracles have resisted, not with adequate vigour perhaps, the historical attack, but have put their main strength into the contention that the belief in an Incarnate Christ is inseparable from the belief in a miraculously born and miraculously risen Jesus: "our faith," they would say, "in Christ as the Saviour stands or falls with the facts of the Virgin Birth and the Empty Tomb."

To find a common wrestling-ground for the antagonists resort is had to the dictionary. A disputant looks out in a standard authority the word "Miracle," and transcribes the definition that (to state it briefly and generally) a miracle is an occurrence which is not in agreement with the known laws of nature. He goes on to argue that of the miracles recorded of Jesus, some, as the Healings, are not miracles under this definition but examples of subtler laws now coming into clearer view, and that those of another character are insufficiently attested. The Christian apologists follow him on to this ground, and argue for the credibility of St. Luke as a historian and for the reasonableness of miracle at that epoch as the natural evidence of a divine intervention in things human. Both make their appeal to logic, the logic of science and particularly historical science, and the logic of the science of sciences, theology or "divine philosophy."

One who believes with conviction that the Christian apologist has the truth in substance, but is far less sure

that he has it in a sound *form*, will offer the suggestion that this apologist and his controversialist should find their ways back again from the logical jungle, come outside the maze, turn their eye and mind from their paths of an "inextricable error," and fix them on a quite new mark.

Yet we will go again to the dictionary, but this time to a Latin dictionary, the more elementary the better.

For the word we will now look up will not be *miracle* but *miraculum*, and the translation given will probably hold nothing about the uniformity of nature, but will inform us that a *miraculum* (from *mirari*) is a thing which makes us "wonder." This we propose as the new clue with which to attempt the maze—a Miracle is that which makes us wonder.

What is it to wonder ?

We shall advance our own account of Wonder without attempting to justify it here by any psychological analysis, believing that it will justify itself by its fruitfulness in application. Wonder is not a functioning of the logical faculty, though it holds in solution the most potent logic. It is not an intellectual operation, though it is supreme intelligence. It is a movement of the personality as a whole ; mind, heart, and will concur in it. This movement can occur when there presents itself to the consciousness something which is both new and also great, and demands from the consciousness an appropriate response. If the object is only new, the effect on the consciousness is not wonder ; it is mere surprise, an emotion of which animals are as susceptible as man. A horse which shies at meeting a novel instrument of transport feels surprise, and has the needed reaction, that of avoidance. The Chinaman who met the first railway

engine in China had the surprise, but had also wonder. Here was a thing mightier than himself and his works, and he exclaimed (as we remember) that the supernatural was in it ; the malignant supernatural, no doubt, but still a greater than he. His wonder was a movement of the whole man in response to the stimulus of a thing too great for him ; his mind recognised something beyond its compass, his heart felt the throb of fear, his will addressed itself for self-protection.

When a Christian receives on his soul the effect of Miracle, his wonder is this response of his whole nature to the stimulus of the new which is greater than he is. There is a reaction of his thoughts ; he answers, as did the subject of the chief of miracles, "How shall this be?" A reaction of his emotions ; he seeks to "love the appearing" of the Divine One who is agent. A reaction of his will ; he utters the "Be it unto me according to Thy word !" This it is to believe that a miracle has happened ; it is to make response by these reactions.

Can we bring these several functionings of the nature under one formula ? I would attempt it by describing them as the details of a movement in which the personality or self of the man encounters a challenge from the greater than self, provoking him to an acceptance of it. The accustomed environment of the Self has changed its character, has deepened, and is emitting from depths hitherto beyond contact the stimulation of new forces, the pressures upon the soul of a new order of fact. What will be the attitude of the Self toward this novel pressure of the Not-Self ? Will it armour itself up against it as an assailant, by shutting the gates of sense and intelligence upon the aggressive truth, or will it throw the gates wide and welcome

in a reinforcement of friends? In less figurative language, will the human organism expand and assimilate a new material and opportunity of vital activity, or will it confine itself to the previous range of its being? In language not less abstract but more interpretative of ultimate fact (which is religious fact), will the man's soul make surrender of itself to the diviner reality now presented to it, and so enter into communion with the deeper fact, or will it maintain isolation? That movement of the personal being which we have called wonder is the process of this choice: it is the soul deliberating over the challenge of Miracle, whether to welcome or repel, to lie open or to be impervious to the intrusion of the Greater than nature, to attempt communion with the Divine or remain incommunicable. If the indeterminate movement of wondering determines itself in an act of self-surrender to the new-found Greatness in the world which is the soul's encompassment, then wonder has become Faith. And this is a faith that saves: for to be saved is to have life, but life is no other thing than this same response of a self-surrender to Reality made by the thing that seeks to live; and the life of soul is its self-surrender to the supreme reality, the God unto whom all live.

This, then, is the account here offered of how Miracle makes belief. Miracle is the presentation, not to the mind, but to the soul or whole personality, of new fact which provokes the movement of wonder. This wonder is the initial activity of the soul by which she replies to the demand that she should surrender herself to the new fact, and identify herself with it. This initial activity, if it goes on to make the surrender, is the

activity of faith, faith that saves. But wonder must have its perfect work or it will not issue in faith. It may dwindle into incuriousness or may grow into conviction, may smoulder to extinction or flame into life. Faith and unfaith are the respective issues of a miracle, the alternatives of response or refusal of response to the stimulus of a fact which presents itself as the wonderful. This is an account of the function of miracle in religion which differs essentially from the account usually rendered, that miracle causes belief by operating a breach of natural law and thereby giving evidence that a greater than law is here. Our account differs from this last not by contradicting but by comprehending it ; differs from it as the whole differs from a part. We say that Miracle proves truth, not by imparting knowledge to the understanding, but by pricking the personality into life.

II

We can now begin to apply the principle of Miracle, as the cause of wonder which issues in Faith, to the belief in the miraculous character of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, that is, to the article of the creed "Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." Let us, as we proposed, keep excluded from our mind those trains of logic along which we have somewhat lost our way ; let us not think about nature's uniformities and the evidential value of breaches of uniformity, but only of this—Is the claim of the Virgin Birth upon our credence the claim of a miracle which provokes to wonder to the end of inducing faith ?

But we must begin much further back than the Nativity of Jesus Christ. The Christian who is unused

to abstract thinking about his religion supposes that when he names the Incarnation he is meaning the Nativity ; that when he expresses belief in the Virgin Birth he is declaring his belief that God was made Man. The Incarnation, he thinks, took place when Mary gave birth to her babe, or rather, when she accepted at the Annunciation the action on her of the "power of the Highest." But he must discriminate two uses of the same word ; there is the Incarnation which is an event in time, and the Incarnation which is a law of timeless fact. The former, the historic Incarnation, will seem to the simple to be the real object of his faith ; the other to be for himself an unreality. This estimate he must learn to invert. He must teach himself that the event of the birth and death of one man in human time can have no efficacy *merely as such* on the believer, but only through some spiritual force of which it is the necessary channel. This spiritual force we conceive of as a current of divine action, passing, during all time, along the plane of human existence, and everywhere making for the unifying, for the At-onement, of the nature of man in the flesh with the Divine Spirit, annulling to that end the separation of the human from the Divine which we name the Fall. We must help ourselves to this conception by images drawn from sensible things. As the law of gravitation is in the inanimate world, or (to take an example from more cognate fact) as the law of evolution is in the animated, so in the world of personal existence is the law of Incarnation. It is our name for the creative activity of God, as that action is modified by the fact of human sinfulness and consequent disunion of creature from Creator. It is in truth our reading of the world-process, so far as man's destiny is concerned in

that process. When we seek, as Christian thinkers, to analyse further this creative action, we say, in the speech of theology, that God gave His Son to redeem the world from sin and reconcile man to God ; and, in the speech of abstract reasoning, that the life of the world is a process of sacrifice between the Creator and His creature ; a sacrifice on both sides, in which the Divine renders Himself to the human, and the human makes surrender of self to the Divine. Where this interchange or intercommunion is effected there is an Incarnation, man is reconciled to his Maker, he abides in God and God in him, he has his life unto God.

This is the object towards which the Church directs the regard of the Christian, when she bids him believe in the Incarnation if he would be saved. But to believe in this—what is it ? It is no doubt to figure to himself this divine force passing through all things ; but to do this is little. It will no more “save” the man than it would save his life of body that he should correctly figure to his mind the formula of gravitation, if he failed to conform his actions to that truth and should step over a precipice to his death. To have the faith which saves, the man must make surrender of *all* his being which is to be saved, in *all* its diverse motions of thought, emotion, will, to the divine will which energises in the fact, Incarnation. He must both have the vision of the world-process, and also, with all his energies, further that process. He must not alone contemplate this movement in things, this eternal sacrifice, on the pattern of which is woven the destiny of man, but must co-operate in it, must actually make in himself that sacrifice of self, and so be fellow-worker with God. He must not *think* the Incarnation, he must (shall we say it ?) *be*

an Incarnating, be a particle of the Flesh which the Word is made, of the human which "dies divine," dies to self and lives unto God. This, and no less than this, is the faith in the Incarnation which he who wills to be saved must rightly believe.

Do we allow this? If we do, the allowance is momentous. It declares that the demand which the Church makes upon her children is that they should hold their faith *thus*; that they should co-operate with the Incarnation, not affirm it; not define the sacrifice and communion between God and man, but in the man's own person offer that sacrifice and make that communion. Only this satisfies the Church that a Christian is a true member of her: and, beside this, she asks of a member nothing. Is this allowed by us all, when we speak of being in communion with the Church, of satisfying her tests, of subscribing to her creeds?

I suppose that many of us would hesitate to allow this without some reserve. We shall demur that we seem to be yielding up the need of professing a creed, and that if the Church should dispense with assent to definitions of belief and should try to "look on the heart" only, she would be unable to distinguish her true children from those who were not, because hearts are secret, whereas words are open and can be judged. She requires, we say, certainly that a man believe in his heart, but she must require also that he confess with his mouth; she must have the will, but also the word.

It is so. Even the man's own faith needs also the confession of the mouth, much more does the Church need it from him. But—and here is a question we have indeed to weigh—*what* is the word she ought to require?

It must be an outward word which really answers to an inward will, a formula of belief which is really expressive of the faith. If then the man makes his confession in words which adequately declare that he is endeavouring to offer his life a sacrifice to the God who made him, does that confession, even if it be framed in language which is not that chosen by the Church, qualify for Communion ; or ought the Church to refuse him membership unless the words of his mouth are her words and no other ?

This is a question which is now before us. It is being claimed by some over this very controversy about the Miraculous that the substance of a man's belief should be accepted instead of the form ; that it is enough if a believer declares his belief in the Divinity of Christ, though he declines to assert with the Church His miracle-working. This claim finds the Church, one must think, somewhat unready for a judgment upon it. The question raised is a new one, and churchmen have not yet thought it out. It must, however, be thought out ; the relative rights of substance and form, spirit and letter, in subscription to creed and formulary, must be better determined than as at present, if we are not to risk the exclusion from our Communion of many who are ours in reality, with the inclusion of many who say they are ours and are not. But to determine this—how hard ! What courage it asks, what selflessness, and, above all, what faith !—faith in the Eternal Spirit who is with the Church all her days and gives her the right judgment in all things.

I turn from our glance at this problem to our main subject, What is the part which the miraculous plays in

the belief in the Incarnation, when by the Incarnation we mean, not the historical event of the earthly life of Jesus, but the eternal fact of an ever-acting force by which man is being united to God and the separation which came through sin is being annulled ?

There is, it will be thought, no miracle in the case at all, for no uniformity of nature is broken by the discovery of a force which is itself a uniformity, the widest of all laws that are. This Incarnation is not, as miracle in the dictionaries, "a marvellous event occurring within human experience which cannot have been brought about by the operation of any natural agency," for the movement or process by which the human is being united with the divine, though it may be called an event which occurs within human experience (for men do experience this effect in their own persons), is no contradiction of any natural law ; just so far as it is "experienced" by men, it is according to human experience, and therefore is "natural."

It was our design, however, in this inquiry to turn our mind quite away from the old logical questions about the contradiction of natural law, and to think of Miracle only as that which causes Wonder.

But in the sense of causing wonder the Incarnation plainly is a miracle. It is by that operation of the soul of man to which we have given the name of Wonder that we attain to belief in the Incarnation. That presentation to our consciousness of an invisible but eternal and universal force, which is moving all things human and our own personal being among them towards union with the Divine Being, is a call of the Infinite to the Finite, a touch of the ghostly on the fleshly. The soul's answer to that call and touch is the thrill of doubtful recognition,

undetermined at first between rejection or acceptance of the entry of the spiritual fact, uncertain whether to expand and welcome inward or to contract and repel the new greatness pressed upon it. If at this summons of the Spirit to the flesh our heart "fears and is enlarged," and makes surrender to the offered doom of a citizenship in heaven, then the soul's movement which began as the passion of wonder is perfected as the attainment, Faith. In this way the miraculous is cause of the belief that the Word is made Flesh and dwells among us. It starts us upon a road which may lead us to conviction of that truth.

III

From the mystical Incarnation we return to the historic Incarnation, which is the specific Christian belief, to ask, Has miracle an effect on our faith in the Son of God made man in the person of Jesus, Son of Mary?

What is the Historic Incarnation, and in what relation does it stand towards the mystical Incarnation on the one hand and to our consciousness on the other?

This question is the whole problem, in another form, of the Christian's faith: it asks, What think ye of Christ?—a question to which it would be idle to ask that an answer should be given in passing, during a discussion of a minor problem which is included within that whole problem. To find an answer to our own present question, What has miracle to do with our faith? it is enough if I express my own understanding of the truth in this way.

The Historic Incarnation is that which *makes us sure* of the Eternal Incarnation. It makes us sure, because it makes the truth of the divine-human union become

objective, which is to say, real. If I have an experience of that union which is only my own experience, if, as we say, my belief is merely subjective, it may be that I am mistaking a fancy for a fact. But if another man has the same experience, and still more if two or three have it, then the thing is a fact not only within my single consciousness, but in the Other than Self, the objective world. There is at once assurance in a degree immeasurably greater than when the experience was only in myself. If instead of two or three it is a vast multitude of other men, in fact the whole Catholic Church, who declare that same experience, my conviction is strongly founded indeed. But the Church is not catholic in the sense of being actually, as well as ideally, universal: the basis of belief accepted by the Greek, ὃ πᾶσι δοκεῖ τοῦτ' εἶναι φάμεν (what is true for all men is truth), has not yet been laid. That basis is laid at last when the experience of being made one with the Divine is found not in all men, numerically considered, but in a Man who was all of man: a one Person in whom the whole personality of Man was actualised, so that he who should know what Jesus was would know all that Manhood is. Such a Person the Christian believes Jesus to have been. He was not all men in the sense of exhibiting all the varieties of human character and fortune in His one brief existence. He was all Manhood in the sense of being in His life's action that which humanity in its essence and perfection is. For essential and perfect humanity is God's creature, man, realising wholly the Creator's will, man becoming the thing which God named when He spoke the "Let there be man." This thing Jesus did become: that Creator's will He did realise. For He made His life an unreserved sacrifice of self to the

Father and to His fellow-men in the Father's name : not His will, but God's, was done, from cradle to grave, in His action and in His suffering. And this sacrifice (for that must be added, though we often forget it in our theologies) was a sacrifice which God accepted. That offering of the human self was not laid in vain upon the altar, to lie cold and unconsumed, with no voice nor any that answered. The fire of the Lord fell and answered the sacrificer's gift by a gift of the Eternal's Self. Jesus was declared the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead. This, then, is what we assert when we claim that Jesus was perfected humanity : He was a human Self perfectly made one with God by the "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice" which He made not only by His death, but by the whole action of His existence in time.

IV

The Christ of history, then, is the assurance which makes our faith sure by objective experience. But what is the sense in which we are made sure ? What is it in us which receives the assurance ?

There is the greatest need at this moment in Christianity that this question should be asked. Christians in general are not aware that there is such a question. All seems so plain. Jesus Christ revealed the truth to man : He taught it in word, He exemplified it in deed : men saw and heard Him once, and through the senses of the witnesses and their narration can see and hear Him now. Seeing is believing ; we see through the eyes of others, the witnesses ; we see, and therefore we believe.

That is to say that Jesus reveals the truth to men's intelligence ; He assures our mind.

But to have our mind assured of the Incarnation is nothing, if it is no more than this : it is nothing at least towards the saving of men ; nothing, then, as to faith. For faith in Jesus Christ Incarnate is the surrendering of the whole man of the believer to the fact that Jesus Christ is "come in the flesh." Jesus then reveals God to us if He makes present the Incarnation fact to our whole conscious being, intellectual, emotional, and practical at once, and so makes opportunity for our total self to respond to that fact by a surrender of self. To our *minds* He reveals the Incarnation, when to the vague and shadowy conception of a mystical union of God with man there is given by the concrete existence on earth distinct feature and palpable substance. What had been a vision painted on a cloud is now the spectacle of a divine drama, in which the actor presents himself in the realness of human flesh to eye and ear, and almost to the handling of the hand. To our hearts the revelation is that it kindles up the devout but pensive sentiment towards a Supreme Power, felt by the philosophic seeker of truth, into the passion of energetic love in a Paul or a John or an Augustine. To our wills the Christ is revealed when by His act of sacrifice the resolve of self-devotion is clinched in us, and the wise pagan's study to live according to Nature is vivified into the disciple's *Imitatio Christi*.

And to believe in the historic Incarnation is to be reached and penetrated in all parts of our being by these several rays which convey the revelation of Jesus, the Man who was made one with God. It is to unthink all other thoughts and dissolve all other imaginations,

that this one image may possess our mind ; to forsake all other affections and offer the soul as a bride of the Lamb ; to re-enact in the experience of a mortal's course the great obedience unto death. No less a thing than this is it to believe rightly the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The faith which the Church demands of us is no less than this. And if she demand a confession of this faith by a formula of human speech, as she needs must demand, the formula must set forth no less a belief than this, even if it should be that we needed to transcend the limits of the creeds formulated in days less ripe than ours. The subscription which shall test our true membership should be to words which declare that "I believe that in the man Jesus Christ who suffered under Pontius Pilate the union of Man with God was made available for all men and for me, unto salvation ; and of this means of salvation I do and will with all my powers avail myself, God being my helper."

V

Is this belief, then, in a historical Incarnation operated by miracle ? It is, if I remember, sometimes said that the personality of Jesus is a miracle, for that a sinless human personality is a breach of the uniformity "all men are sinful." But this is the miracle known to logic, and we have forsworn attention to this. Yet miraculous in the sense of wonder-causing the Person of Jesus is. He who believes in the historic Christ as the Name in whom and through whom he may receive health and salvation does something far more than confess the emergence in history of a personality unique by being without sin. He accepts as the cause of life to his own soul the self-

sacrifice which makes that personality what it is. He confesses that Life through Sacrifice is not only the ideal principle on which the worlds are built, but is a principle which has been actualised in the actual of human existence, and that on it is built not the world's existence but his own. To believe this is to respond to the stimulus of that fact with all his being at once : it is to image the fact by his understanding, to cling to it in love, to enact it in the drama of his own deeds : briefly, it is to lose life with Jesus that he may find. Ah ! but to believe this thing, to believe that Sacrifice of Self is not an ideal in the transcendent heaven, a pattern seen in the Mount, but a power immanent in the earth-plane, a force which moves things in the thronged market-place of human business, a force which determines a man's doom as inevitably as does the bread he eats and the air he breathes ; to believe that Sacrifice does this, for in Jesus Christ it has done it once,—this is to yield to the appeal of the Wonderful, the stroke of Awe. As we should tremble at a ghost that should stand fair but awful among our children in their circle at the hearth—nay, as the first family of the Christ did stare “terrified and affrighted” at Him whom they supposed a spirit—so the nature of man trembles with the thrill of wonder under the appeal of One who was dead and is alive again, who laid His life down that He might take it again. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” How does the inmate's heart behind the door echo that summons ? The knock comes at the door of a Galilean yeoman's heart, and he says to himself “It is the Christ” : at the door of a High Priest Caiaphas, and he rises and doubles bolt and bar : at the door of the materialist of any day, and he

says "there was no knock, only a spar that grated on the pane, a tile that dropped from the roof." But the purer spirit wakes and starts and knows who is the challenger. He wonders, and by heaven's grace wonders on into faith; opens to the awful guest who shall come in and they shall sup, the Lord with His disciple and the disciple with his Lord in all-blest Communion. But wonder must have her perfect work. Peter, who at the first summons of his belief has cried "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," must grow into the Peter who cried "Lord, to whom should we go; thou hast the words of eternal life"; the disciples who were terrified and affrighted must become the disciples "glad having seen the Lord." This is the sacrifice of the soul, to accept as the law by which she will live that sacrifice of Jesus. Thus is wonder perfected as faith.

The contention I am concerned to press home is that if we have attained this faith in the historicalness of the Incarnation, we have attained the faith which saves us, and therefore the faith which the Church requires us to confess, if we are to be counted members of her. This faith is that a man believes Jesus to be God working on earth, by one Man's action there in history, the redemption of men; that he believes this in the sense that the perfect sacrifice of self, which was the essential action on earth of Jesus and which constituted His distinctive human personality, is the law of existence by which man, if he identifies himself with it, can be saved; and that he believes this in the sense, not of assenting to a proposition, but of making a surrender of his spirit to that law and so identifying with its working the fortune of his being.

This the Church demands of her member ; this, no less and no more. To believe with such a believing in a Christ who is not mystical only but also historic, is the Christian belief in the Incarnation.

But I am also concerned to point out that this belief has been attained by the instrumentality of Miracle. The thing that has called on us for a belief is miracle : it makes appeal to the movement of the soul we have called Wonder, being the soul's first effort to respond, by a self-opening and enlargement, to that which is new to her and greater, the supersensuous divine order of Fact which asks to be received. Here then is exemplified the proper part of Miracle in religion, that of stimulating the human spirit to a wondering at the divine fact presented to it, which can be ripened into an acceptance of this wonderful reality—a union with the Divine by which the human can have life.

Is any conception of the function of miracle more ancient and better authorised than this of ours ? “Behold, the bush burned with fire and was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him,” and the revelation is made. Moses wonders at the wonderful, and his wondering ends in faith.

VI

Let the train of reflections here pursued find illustration by some study of the problem in theology which is insistent at this moment, that of Miraculous Christianity. This study should be of the two miracles which are cardinal, those of the Virgin Birth and the

Resurrection. The former shall be first considered, but somewhat briefly : the other will engage us longer.

But we will approach the Virgin Birth here as a problem of faith, not of historical and literary criticism. As regards the latter aspect, however, it is well to use such candour as to the writer's position as is necessary to secure an unsuspicious attention. This writer's position is, he believes, that of the Church at large. It is the position of belief arrested by still recent challenge. For there really exists a debate upon the matter among believers even within the communion of the Anglican Church ; there is no longer a negligible challenge by irresponsible individual members. The authorities of the Church would hardly say that the article of the creed which asserts the Virginity of Mary is beyond the reach of question by the methods of history and literature ; they would rather say that these form a part only of the grounds on which our faith in the article takes its stand, and that the historic evidence needs to be clinched by spiritual reasons why the Birth should be other than human. The Church is in controversy over a point of doctrine, as so often in her story, and the corporate mind has to re-examine its belief and re-settle it by "the light of the Holy Spirit," whether the "right judgment in all things" shall in this thing be to re-affirm simply, or to re-formulate, or only to re-interpret an unchanged form of words.

Her attitude must be that of trustful suspense. And when could this trustful suspense be better justified than when the Church faces the same problem of faith as did she, who was and is the sole witness to the event presented, to her by direct announcement, to us by tradition,

—that Handmaid of the Lord, who in “a wise passiveness,” in a readiness to hearken what the Lord would say concerning her, met the miracle offered to her soul with the wonder “How shall this be?” and then with the faith “Be it unto me according to thy word.”

But in this suspensive attitude, which the present moment seems to require of us, this middle station between an arrogant positivism in some attackers of the article and a not always humble dogmatism in some defenders, we shall find support and comfort for an uneasy posture of the soul in the reflections which have been engaging us.

For, remembering that faith in an article of belief is not a mental assent to a proposition, but a surrender of all the soul to a spiritual reality, we shall first ask ourselves what is that spiritual reality for which the Virgin Birth is the name. It cannot be the mere physical and temporal event of a human life generated by other than nature's process, for our souls can be in no spiritual relation to a merely physical event. What then? The answer is involved in those interpretations which theologians have rendered. They speak of a “sinful entail cut off” by the absence of fatherhood (a doctrine that requires the support of such a dogma as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin herself, which the Roman communion has resorted to): or they rest, not perhaps consciously, on the Augustinian idea that sex is sin and virginity of the essence of sinlessness,—an idea which seems to deny a share in the Incarnation to a principle most elemental in human nature, that of the transmission of life, the sacred fire. These infirm interpretations are avowals that the fact which is the object of faith is the Sinlessness of Jesus. If the disputers of the article could

make good their denial of the physical event, they would not thereby disprove this sinlessness : they would prove that we are mistaken in associating it with that event, but the object presented to our faith would be left untouched. It rests upon quite other grounds of credence.

These grounds I will endeavour to indicate in barest delineation.

The sinlessness of Jesus is a negative attribute ; and it would be vain to attempt to prove this negative, that Jesus in the Thirty Years of which scarce so many months fall under the record, did no sin. The positive fact, of which sinlessness is the passive aspect, is the perfect communion of Jesus with the Divine Being, whereby He is the Life and the giver of Life to man. This is what we mean when we call Him the Incarnate. Incarnation means communion of God and man perfected, the utter at-onement of the human will with the divine ; means life originated in man dead in sin. Our proof that Jesus of Nazareth was this Incarnate One is by experience.

That experience is that a believer has a present and immediate knowledge that a communion of his soul with God has happened to him ; or, as I would rather term it, that a life has come to his soul by which it lives unto God. And he knows, also by experience, how this happened. This communion or life was kindled in him by parent or teacher, whose faith in contact with him occasioned faith in himself. But these owed their own communion with God to their teachers, these to the generations before them, till the transmission is traced back up an unbroken ascent to the Apostles, then from them to Jesus,—but from Him to none. He is the

author of the Communion, the underived Fount of this river of Life. He calls no man His Father upon earth : one is His Father which is in heaven.

Thus is it that we prove the Historic Christ, the Incarnation in history. Within that conclusion, as a portion or single member of the whole conclusion, is proved the Sinlessness of Jesus. That is, the spiritual reality, which is what we are believing when we believe the Virgin Birth, has been secured for our faith. This history, not that miracle, is our ultimate need. When assured that, as a fact in history, one was born in Bethlehem who was a Sinless One, we have the assurance which our soul demands, and which we had thought we could possess only if He was born in miracle. Having this, we can bear the suspense while the Church is weighing again her teaching which historical doubts have challenged.

And may it not be that this suspense is due, not only as to the actual history of Christ's entry into the world of human kind, but also as to the right interpretation, when the history shall have been determined, of the underlying spiritual reality ? The Church hitherto has seemed content to understand the Virgin Birth as the expression in terms of human circumstance of the Sinlessness of Jesus. In this understanding of it there are difficulties at which we have glanced : the physical fact is not convincingly apt as a symbol of the spiritual fact, for it is not plain how the "entail of sin is cut off" by a birth other than normal, still less that normal parentage has in itself the character of sin. The thought will force itself upon us that the method by which the Holy One entered the world of sinful flesh is a mystery

which the Church has still to read with perfect apprehension. The scriptures in which she has read the record are of an appealing sincerity and of that beauty which is ever a witness to reality. Let her go back and search again those scriptures, and with them that other scripture written by the Spirit on the tables of her *anima Christiana*, to know whether this Thing be only so as she has understood it, or be deeper and more wonderful than so, a way of God past finding out, but calling on man's imagination to seek until he find.

And yet, when all is said, a miracle there is, and by that miracle has been wrought our faith. It is the miracle of the Christ of history, of a Personality manifested within time and space, a Personality energising in flesh of man, and yet the cause for man of a life which is from God. This is Miracle, for to Wonder it stirs the soul. If Wonder shall have her perfect work, if the soul to whom this Christ of history has made Himself present shall "fear and be enlarged" to welcome in and to become one with the greatness that stands at the door and knocks, then will wonder be perfected as faith, this man will have believed rightly the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this faith shall make him whole.

"Now we believe not because of thy saying, O gospeller of the birth of Jesus; for we have known Him ourselves, and know that this Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

VII

Our other illustration of the part played by the miraculous in a Churchman's faith cannot be so briefly

set out. It is the problem of belief presented by the article of the Creed, "The third day He rose again from the dead."

Is a reader conscious, as this writer is, of a change in his mental and spiritual temperature when the passage is made from a study of the one article to the other, from the Virgin Birth to the Resurrection? Does he find that there is an instant rise in that temperature of the soul, that a keener intellectual curiosity and a sterner moral anxiety penetrates him, when, having asked, Was the mother who bore Jesus virgin? he goes on to ask, Was the grave indeed found empty, and was the Redeemer's Body requickened into life? If he finds this is so with him, he will not count the experience to be without significance: he will be made to think that the two articles of his faith are not of equal value, do not hold the same proportion to his whole of belief, nor exert one equal momentum on his personal fate as a man who lives by faith. If this is true, it cannot be unimportant to keep the truth in mind; for there is some danger in present controversies of this due proportionment being neglected. The beginning and the end of the redemptive action may well have parallelism, and yet not have equivalence of import.

Our method of study must follow the same lines as before. We shall begin by recognising that the word Resurrection, when it names a doctrine, requires us to distinguish. The Resurrection is part of the Incarnation, a phase, a moment of the whole divine action. As there was a universal, spiritual, mystical Incarnation, a force by which God for ever and everywhere is drawing His creature Man into union with Himself, but also there was a particular, historic Incarnation, an exhibition of that time-

long, world-wide force in the actual union of the divine nature with the human nature of one Man, Jesus—so is there a spiritual or eternal Resurrection, a force in things by which Self-sacrifice causes Soul to live beyond the physical incident called Death, and there is also a temporal, historic Resurrection, an exhibition of that force once in time through the spectacle of what befell the soul of Jesus, who by self-sacrifice lived through death, suffered as behoved the Christ, and entered into His glory.

The tenet of a universal or ideal Resurrection is not a tenet of Christians only, as neither is the ideal Incarnation. Resurrection is the word of a Christian's faith, when with the ideal Survival his creed combines the historic Survival of Jesus. The historic belief is, here again, essential, because in the making of faith "historic" means "objective." We are not sure of the law that sacrifice makes life until we see it realised in the objective world. It was so realised when one man, who was All of Man, did by his sacrifice live on through body's death. Then we learnt that the Spirit of Sacrifice, of which our simpler name is Love, not only is "Lord of All," but this one time was Lord in this one thing of All, the soul of Jesus and His fate; Love whom we had guessed to be strong as death was in a visible trial of strength proved stronger. Christ had loved utterly even unto death, and behold He was dead but is alive for evermore.

This, then, is the belief which the Church demands of her children, a belief in a Resurrection which is at once a mystical and a historic reality, a Rising through death to life which is a universal fact in existence, and has been once in time the Rising of one man, Jesus.

Yet, let it be said again, it is not a *belief*, as that function of the soul is commonly conceived, that is required of the Christian as the ground of communion with the Church. Belief, conceived of as a mental acceptance of a truth, is only the beginning of faith. The faith which "saves" is, in our understanding of religion, the whole surrender of the self to that reality which the creed names or symbolises for us by framing its "articles of belief" : it is our communion, our self-identification with so much of God's will and thought as is presented to our consciousness ; it is the effort by which the soul integrates, if we may so speak, her fragmentary self with the divine Whole. This act of self-integration with the eternal process, is not *this* the act of faith which is the necessary condition of membership in the Church ? And is it any other thing than this that we are intending when we describe the genuine faith of a Christian as being, not the acceptance of a Christian doctrine, but a personal devotion to the Person of our Lord ? It is no other. The analysis we have offered of the believer's act is only an attempt to translate into the drier symbolism, which is an apter instrument for our reasonings on religion, that homelier, humaner, but less scientific and defined symbolic of the man who says, "My faith is not to assent to definitions of the Church, but to know Jesus Christ as a Master whom I can love and be loved by, and to devote my life to the willing of His will, and the working of His work."

VIII

But the belief in a historic Resurrection required for communion in the Church comprehends, it will be said, a belief in a Resurrection of the Body of Jesus. Only

here, it may be thought, do we reach the point of interest. A historic rising and a bodily rising seem to most Christians to be interchangeable terms. And so I hope to show they are, if only the term "body" is rightly understood. At once it can be said that to state that Christ "took again His body," that thus the tomb was left empty, and the wound-prints could be offered to the view of disciples, is to make a more specific statement of the nature of the historic event. It names certain details of the process by which Jesus, after His death on the cross, made the passage from the conditions of His earthly existence to the conditions of the heavenly. How to conceive these details, how to interpret the report of them which has come down to us in documents from the contemporary witnesses of the facts, is a problem which severely exercises believers, and of which the solution seems to many of them to constitute the *articulus stantis et cadentis fidei*.

The controversy, of which "the Empty Tomb" is the index title, is a contention as to a physical happening. Did the fleshly body of Jesus suffer corruption in the grave while an appearance of it was presented to the senses of the witnesses; or was his body resuscitated, withdrawn from the tomb, and brought, invested now with new conditions and powers, to the sight and touch of men? These alternatives are, by those who hold either the one or the other, supposed to involve the alternative conclusions that the Rising from death of Jesus was a delusion or was a fact, with the consequences respectively of a distrust or of a confidence in the divinity of Christ and in a life after death for man. Is this reading of the issue a sound one?

Do the deniers or the affirmers of a resuscitation of

the buried body realise the limitations which confine their reasonings on the matter? They are inquiring into the nature of a process through which the Person of Jesus passed from the material into the spiritual condition of being. That process is extended in two planes of existence, the fleshly and the ghostly, and of these planes only the one falls under the observation of human senses. Only the first stage of the action of the personality can be investigated by positive inquiry: the facts of the empty tomb, whether it was made empty by human agency of friends or enemies of the Dead or by some other means; the evidences of the vacant cerecloths; and again the experiences, received through eye and ear by the disciples, of contact with the Body which appeared to them—these are observable facts, and we can reason about the accuracy of the observation actually employed at the time, and about the right interpretation by us now of the things reported then by the observers. But when we have done this we have at best come to understand the earlier stage of the process; the later action takes place in a medium where we cannot observe and where our reasonings float in a vacuum. But this later action alone can be the interpreter of the earlier, if in this as in all other inquiries we must “look to the end” in order to know what a fact is in its beginning or its mid-course: if we must know the whole before we can understand a part. This reflection should rebuke the positiveness of one party to this controversy and soothe the anxieties of the other.

IX

But let us, as we began by doing in this study of the miraculous, extricate ourselves from our bewilderment in

a maze of logic, get again outside the problem, and attempt it from a new point of departure. Before inquiring what happened to the Body of Jesus when it lay in earth and when it appeared to the disciples, will it not be well to ask ourselves What a Body is ?—A Body, whether material or spiritual. Many believers certainly in the Resurrection Body, and some at least of the contesters, do not ask themselves this question ; Body is a thing so familiar that they assume it is also well known—an assumption which is not justified ; most familiar need not be best known ; often it is the other way.

When, then, we do put the question to ourselves, and find the simple man's answer, that body is something he can see and touch, is not adequate, can we look into the reality further than to define a human body as a set of relations between one person and another, relations by which they have the intercourse of mutual knowledge and of action upon each other in the sphere of sensible existence ?

That is not an account of the matter which will be accepted by everybody as self-explanatory ; but what is meant is this.

To know and to act upon existence, even mere inanimate matter, what is it but to bring that matter into being by an interaction of a Subject and an Object, a Mind and a Thing. A relation springs between them, and the springing of this relation is the creation of the Thing or Object. It takes two to make a world, even when that world is not alive. When that which is brought into being is a thing that has life, this dual action of the maker and the made is more visible to our intelligence. For when we contemplate life in its *process* (and only so can we learn what life is in its creation, since

beginnings are beyond our observation) we see it to be a communion of Two by a mutual self-impartment ; there is the organism, in germ, and its environing world ; or, on the summits of existence there is the Soul and the Soul's Creator. We may tell ourselves that Creation is *ex nihilo* and that God is all in all, and apart from Him nothing exists ; and that is true for our faith, but not for our imagination. Our power to image the reality is brought to a stay when it has reached this dualism and cannot get behind it.

“ What see we else

In the dark backward and abysm of time ”

than these two, however they came there, God on the one side and on the other His creature, uncreate as yet but there, and to be created alive by this mutual activity in which the creaturely Self and the Divine are rendered each to the other. Our thinking has ended in a dualism, and dualism, we all know, is philosophic failure ; but which of us by taking thought can add to his mental stature one inch of further knowledge ? The believer who is content thus to understand the work of God will not fear that he is impiously setting bounds to the glory of the Creator when he images the creative act as an act of divine-human communion. He will say with Shakespeare—

“ If this be error and upon me proved

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.”

Yes, “ nor no man ever *loved* ” ; for this mutual engendering of new being which we conceive of as the cause of Life, what is it if it be not that Cause of all things, without which was not anything made that was made, and which Christ, the Incarnate Word, through whom God made

the worlds, has taught us by His redeeming sacrifice to know and reverence under the name of Love.

Yes, it is this dualism, the dualism of divine and human, which the Christ came to reconcile into one.

We apply this creational theory to the homely fact of knowing a fellow man "in the body." For this familiar occurrence is a creational act. One personality unites itself to its world at that point in the world which is the personality of another. The relations that spring between us—my seeing him, hearing and being heard, acting upon him or co-operating with him—these are all I know of his body ; and these same relations are all he knows of my body. Accordingly we have defined a Body as a set of relations between one person and another, relations by which they have the intercourse of mutual knowledge and mutual action in the sphere of the sensible existence.

This definition of Body, when it is the body which two personalities, both being in the sphere of the sensible, bring into being by entering into relations one with the other, will give us help when the question is of the body of one who is no longer in the spatial, or at least in what we call the physical, existence. The relations that can spring between two, of whom the one is in the flesh but the other is discarnate, cannot indeed be the same as those between mortal and mortal ; but they will be, as before, relations between two persons. The body which each of them wears, and which is known to or "appears" to the other, will be the sum of these relations ; for it is these relations which constitute a body. To say, then, that Jesus appeared in the body to a disciple is to say that between His personal being and the man's there sprang

the inter-relations of an Appearer and a Beholder, a Speaker and a Hearer, and (though this is less certainly indicated) of one who could touch and one who could be touched: there was again communion of the man and the Master. By this the man knew that Jesus was alive, not dead—by this consciousness of being still in communion with his Master. If Christians in general prefer to describe it by saying that the disciple saw the Risen Lord *by faith*, we are saying the same as they in more closely defining language.

Now if the Risen Body of Jesus is what we find a body to be, the sum of relations between the person of Himself who appears and the person of him to whom He appears, the question about the body which was buried, what happened to it, what change or transfiguration or annihilation befell it, are questions which, though of interest, are of a subordinate interest. If only the fact of an intercourse or communion between Jesus and the disciples be established, we have all that we can have of assurance that He survived, and all we need desire of hope that we shall ourselves survive the event of death. For we have the same assurance as that which at any time assures us that the living friend with whom we are speaking is there and in the body.

The problem called that of the Empty Tomb is indeed not solved by this reasoning. But we can support the present ignorance. To learn by what diviner chemistry, what alchemy of heaven, the mortal substance of the natural body was resolved and recombined into the spiritual, this would be no doubt to gain an extension, vast and perhaps awful, of human insight into the laws by which God makes His world. But one knows not whether it would be an insight into spiritual fact or

only into natural, into some deeper law of nature than those we know, but of nature still and not of grace. Not here at any rate shall we seek to find laid for us the foundation stone of an eternal hope. Not here, but in the evidences that this which stood before men's eyes and addressed their ears in the Upper Room was He Himself, the Person of Jesus who was crucified, dead, and buried—and, behold, He is here, "my Lord and my God."

X

Out of this attempted analysis of the fact which we call a Body and of the appearance of Jesus in bodily form, what has come to us? There has come an interpretation of the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body. Not a new interpretation. It is the oldest, the most scriptural, and among scriptural interpretations the most authoritative, being the reading of the facts of Christ's Rising which is given directly in His own words, "Behold my hands and my feet *that it is I Myself*;" and which is indicated, the more forcibly because not directly but as the implication and supposition of the scene, in the colloquy of Christ and Thomas, where the disciple gains his assurance of the Master's presence by the personal communion effected by the Master's speech, and not (for so the narrative is most naturally read) through the proof of bodily contact. But this interpretation, though not new, is, we trust, a clear one, having been extricated from the vagueness of the unsifted popular conceptions of body framed by the mind of Christians in less self-interrogating ages. As we would now interpret the record, the Resurrection of the Body when Jesus rose was the renewal, or let us rather

say the persistence, of the relations between His person and the persons of men. These had seemed to be destroyed by the death on the cross ; and it was not so. They had undergone a transfiguring change indeed, by the translation of the Divine One of the Two from the fleshly region to the ghostly, or to a footing at once in both : but they were relations still by which Person was bound to person in a communion which was the life of each unto the other.

If this interpretation may stand, then it will be felt that what our faith seeks for its assurance in the tradition of the Rising of Christ is not first or most the Miraculous, if by miraculous is meant that which breaks the natural order. What it seeks is not miracle but history. It craves a certitude that the event has happened, that Jesus with whom men had been in communion before the day of the Cross was after the Cross in communion with them once more, and that these men were certain it was so. For this historic certitude Christians have been asking, under an inadequate name, when they have asked for assurance that the Body laid in the grave was revived again for the service of the Crucified now become the Glorified.

By a *bodily* resurrection they meant a *real* resurrection, one that truly happened. They associated reality with matter, and did not perceive that "flesh, bones," and other corporal elements are real only as they serve some personality, and that persons, which are spiritual substances not corporal, are the only things in the world that are real. A personal survival of Jesus, which plain men are apt to reject when offered them as if it were an unsubstantial shadow *is*, on the contrary, the survival which alone has reality. What is needed is that this

personal survival should be historic, a thing that did once in time take place; that "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body," by which again to hold communion with His own.

We crave the Historic to make us sure of the resurrection. Yet History will not assure us. It has been the mistake of many churchmen to think that it can, and on that ground to deny the fellowship of faith to those who have questioned some foundation stone which is a fact in story, as for example this fact of a resuscitation of the buried limbs of Jesus. But neither History nor yet Idea, neither objective truth nor subjective, is the foundation stone on which to build. Other foundation can no man lay than the Person of Christ Jesus, and that Person is not history nor yet idea, but both. He is the Son of God revealed in us by the utterance of our consciousness, and He is Jesus of Nazareth declared to be the Son of God by the rising from the dead in the garden-close of Joseph the Councillor. It is when subjective thought is wedded to objective fact that our faith is born. To that union comes on the one side that knowledge of herself and of her destiny which the soul carries in her, she knows not whence received,—those "Intimations of Immortality" whispered of by poet and mystic, those experiences given to the man who is neither, and yet who knows of "moments when he feels he cannot die," or has in him "the sacred passion of the second life," or has

" Felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness."

And to that union comes on the other side the "truth embodied in a tale," the Figure that is no shadow cast

by the disciple's mind, but is known by hands and feet that tread earth and heal her sick, by a visage seen once in a transfiguring glory, seen again in a passion marred more than any man's, and seen once again transfigured by the entering into His glory. Both these have we seen, the Christ in the heart and the Christ in the history, the Christ within us and without. When the two visions are found to be one, then it is that we know indeed. Inward and outward, vision of mind and vision of eye, are wed ; and by their union is engendered Faith.

And still we are saying it amiss. It is not vision with vision that makes faith ; it is faith in outward wed to faith in inward that makes faith indeed. Faith in the Inward, in the cosmic movement creating life everywhere, for which our name is Sacrifice or Love, is not the *belief* that there is this force in nature ; it is the identifying of oneself, the co-operation of self, with that movement. Faith in the outward, in the historic sacrifice of Jesus, is not an assent to the record as true ; it is an integration of the self with Jesus in His Person and His fortunes ; the believer in the "bodily" or "real" Resurrection of Jesus unites his personal being and its fortunes to that act of Jesus. He images to his thought the Man who laid down life and took it again, he embraces that same doom for his own with a rejoicing affection, he makes the conduct of Jesus the model for his own practice among men. Who is sufficient for these things ? Yet this and no less than this it is to have the faith that on the third day Jesus rose. And Paul means no less than this when he counts that "we are risen with Christ."

One turns aside here for a moment as a man on a journey might look round him to see a companion of his

way of whom something has made him aware. We are all just now watching the path of the French philosopher, who would persuade us that in the attainment of truth there is a greater than Intelligence, a dimly descried potency which he names Intuition, and labours with much tension of metaphysical subtlety to apprehend for himself and with a wealth of imagery to make visible to us others. When Bergson (*I. M.*, vi.) tells us that "our intelligence can enter into the ever-moving reality, adopt its ceaselessly changing direction, and lay hold on it by means of that intellectual sympathy which one names intuition": that the human spirit can "by reversing the wonted operation of thought arrive at fluent concepts capable of following the windings of Reality and adopting the very movement of the inner life of things," how can we fail to surmise that his path is running alongside of our own. This Intuition by which the philosopher can place his own heart against the beating heart of Reality and for moments be in chime with that greater rhythm which reason's eye hath not seen nor her ear heard,—is it not metaphysic's newest name for a power which the least metaphysical of Christian believers has glimpse of, when he says that the world by the wisdom of the intelligence knew not God, but that he who will do the will shall know of the doctrine. Let the believer seek to identify his being with the reality which men call the Resurrection, or Life which is wrought by Love: let him make the rhythm of his single will beat to the measure of the rhythm of Christ; let him, in the speech of Paul, be crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, risen with Christ—by that intuition he shall see God, with a vision which maketh blest, with a faith that saves his soul alive.

XI

We must bring our tale to an end. History, not miracle in the meaning of a breach of nature's law, is that which a Christian's credence asks for its assurance. And yet, here again in the Resurrection doctrine as in the Incarnation, it is Miracle that works not our credence but our faith. The fact which offers itself to our being's choice and adhesion is a *Miraculum*, a thing that stirs wonder, that calls on the soul to dilate, to fear and be enlarged, to open and make room and welcome for the New that is Greater than the self. That new and great thing, called the Rising of Jesus, is the manifestation in the temporal order of a fact in the eternal order—the power of Personality, human Personality, when it attains by self-sacrifice the perfect life unto God, to overcome the limitations of matter, such as are sickness, the resistances of matter, the fetters of space, and remould matter to the will of spirit. Christ who wholly gave Himself to God the Father by the obedience unto death, though He was dead yet did He live. That is the Miracle—a man in whom human personality was perfect suffered and entered into His glory. What more wonderful can be shown to a disciple's love and faith that it may suffice him?

“Nay,” say many or most believers, “show us the Body that walked in Jewry and was laid in the tomb, show us this rewarmed with blood and strung again with sinew and nerve, and it sufficeth us.” Ye shall see greater things than these,—heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man; the eternal world pulsing its forces into

and through this little orb of the temporal existence lying in the eternal's lap, a star in boundless ether, a petty *enclave* in the wide kingdom of the All. Are these not "greater things" than those which have engrossed your concern, that Empty Tomb, that Reanimated Corse? When you so confidently dogmatise as to *how* Christ was raised and with what body He came, yet more when you would impose your own reading of the problem as the rule of faith for your believing brethren, you will do well to remember that religious speculation on the relation of Finite and Infinite may, even when pious, be presumptuous and some day be proved also fatuous.

XII

And yet because we, who are unready to dogmatise about the less weighty matters of the Resurrection, yet feel with you the longing to see further into this mystery of the Body of the Lord, to strain our thought till it can draw into the ordered whole of our intelligence these not yet intelligible elements, we too will attempt our speculation, trying not to forget that it is nothing more.

For to us it seems that our conception of the Resurrection Fact, as a manifestation of a force in human personality, when perfect in self-sacrifice, to subdue flesh to spirit and break the limitations of matter, gives to the imagination a clue, which promises to lead some little way further through the maze not of the Resurrection problem only but of the whole problem of the miraculous in the Gospel.

There are, in increasing order of the wonderful,

the miracles of the healings, the miracles of power on inanimate nature, the miracles of the raisings from death, the miracle of Christ's own rising. The understanding of the fact which we have ventured to adopt for this last and crowning miracle has a light for the others. The works of healing present no difficulty to credence, if we have once imagined the power upon the material which can go out as virtue from a holy personality ; and indeed there is so much evidence of this capacity to heal even in human personalities as we know them, that the most sceptical are yielding us these as historically true. The multiplication of the loaves, the stilling of a storm, the walking on the sea, though unexampled in our experience of imperfect human personality, yet, *on the assumption of this potency in the human personality*, are credible in themselves, provided that the evidence of their having happened is adequate ; the *a priori* incredibility of such occurrences, which has been the main difficulty for belief, is dissolved for those inquirers who can admit this force of personality to be *in rerum natura*, a thing among things ; and the acceptor of these wonders can await the sifting of the evidence without anxiety lest a verdict if negative should overthrow his belief. The raisings of the dead are but an extension of the same law of personal activity, matter's limits are more violently pushed through. We do but need be sure that the testimony is sound. And so we are brought to Christ's Raising of Himself. He saved others, Himself he also saved. Can imagination penetrate at all the manner of it, as faith can assimilate the fact ? One used, I think, to tell oneself that the body which had left the tomb and yet could not be

confidently recognised in the body of the Risen Jesus, was withdrawn from the world of material things by a "backward spell" of almightiness, a *de-creatio in nihilum*, as it were. That, however, is to resign explanation.

But to resign so readily would be at this epoch of man's research into his universe an almost unworthy resignation. In an age when a strange plasticity is being discerned in Matter through the discovery of openness where we knew density, and of substance where we assumed a void; when the tissues of wood and metal are penetrated by rays of light, and magnetic vibrations can travel along an invisible ether as on a solid causeway; in such an age our imagination should be more bold to conceive the transmutation of bodies. These discoveries are no doubt a revelation only of physical laws, less palpable, but not less material, than the grosser facts with which man has been long familiar; they set a keener edge on the conceiving faculty when it is turned upon the problems of matter, but they can only illustrate by analogy, not interpret with a principle, the action of spiritual on material. But already on the borders of these two regions some light begins to glimmer, as the intimations press in on us that mind and will are able in some measure to vibrate light upon a mind at distance, or send a momentum upon another will. As one muses on all this, the imagination, too much daunted till of late by the dominance of physical science, finds a new courage. Why, it reasons, should it be thought a thing incredible with us that Personality should raise its dead; that it should have power, in its union with the Divine Personality, to work creatively on the matter which itself in that union created, and to unweave and

reweave again the tissues of the fleshly robe which it wove at the first on its own loom? But if this can be, the puzzle of the Empty Tomb begins to clear. Our more naïve believers have imagined the event bluntly no doubt, or, if you will, grossly, but not quite erringly. Christ did, as they have said, "take again His body" dead and laid under earth. He took it. No enemy ravished it away, no friend conveyed and hid it elsewhere. The tomb *was* empty: the body did not lie and see corruption. The alchemy of a creative personality transmuted elements of flesh into elements of spirit, fused the blind atoms of earth-dust into sparks of heaven's fire, struck the grey ashes of the Sacrificed One into the live coals of the sacrifice to a God that answereth by the flame.

So one muses over the evidences, that sepulchre found void, the vacant grave-clothes and their haunting testimony. So one speculates. And it is speculation, it is not knowledge. If the history was certainly thus, then thus can the history have been enacted, and thus may we dare to re-image it to-day. If it was certainly thus. But who is certain that it was thus, only thus? Who dares set to his seal that these chronicles of the dust of Jesus, which we piece together out of the fragments of the first churchmen's memories, have been chronicled perfectly and once for all? Who shall be confident to avow that no record of events can ever leap to light and refashion the half-told tale of Mark and Luke and John; that no discovery of natural forces latent hitherto can ever hold a torch to Nature's secret doings on That which lay in Hades till the third day? Nay, who will be bold to forecast that never shall any fresh intuition of a student-saint fire the testimony

of the men of old with a new prophet's interpretation, taught him of the eternal Spirit ?

When all is said, this Miraculous which so eludes us is not the Miraculous which makes our faith. That Wonderful is not a body having hands and feet, but a voice that said, "Behold, that it is I myself:" this voice, and the centuries of Christian experience which have answered, "It is the Lord." The void tomb, the vacant idle cerecloths, the scarred limbs, all these are of the miracle, though their share in it may be hard to measure: they are of it, but they are not it. The Wonderful which has in truth gendered belief in us is that the Very Christ, He Himself, was there for His disciples then, is here for His disciples now. To believe in the Resurrection is not to know something: it is to be something. It is not to frame or to assent to the credal formula which most nearly reflects the story's facts: it is to render up the self, to widen and make room in it to receive the Reality, of which the story is but dumb symbol and broken hint; it is to open the fastness of the soul in awed surrender and welcome to a Majesty that stands at the gate too low and narrow for its entry. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye ancient doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
CLAREMONT, CALIF.

A5933

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
Edinburgh & London

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

BT317 .S5
Skrine, John Huntley, 1848-1923.
Miracle and history : a study in the vi

BT Skrine, John Huntley, 1848-1923.
317 Miracle and history; a study in the virgin
S5 birth and the resurrection. London, New York,
Longmans, Green, 1912.
48p. 23cm.

1. Virgin birth--Addresses, essays, lectures.
2. Jesus Christ--Resurrection--Addresses,
essays, lectures. I. Title.

CCSC/mmb

A5933

